Georgia’s HealthMPowers

SNAP-Ed REPORT

2015 / 2016
ABOUT SNAP-Ed

What is SNAP-Ed?

SNAP-Ed is the nutritional education component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Through evidence-based, collaborative approaches, SNAP-Ed programs improve the likelihood that low-income families and youth will make healthy food choices and choose active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

Why is SNAP-Ed Important?

Each year, SNAP lifts millions of families out of poverty and hunger, and SNAP-Ed ensures that families have the education they need to maintain lifelong healthy changes. A growing body of research shows that improving food security through SNAP leads to positive outcomes in the short-run and long-run. These positive impacts are especially pronounced for children, whose families receive a large majority of SNAP benefits.

In 2014, SNAP benefits lifted 2.1 million children out of poverty, improving their immediate health and wellbeing, and resulting in better life outcomes and future self-sufficiently.¹

In 2015-2016 HealthMPowers’ SNAP-Ed Program Reached:

- 3 communities
- 6 out of school time providers
- 38 child care centers
- 42 middle schools
- 87 elementary schools
- 41 counties
- 89,768 children

HealthMPowers’ SNAP-Ed initiative Empowering Healthy Choices in Schools, Homes and Communities works with five sectors – child care, elementary schools, middle schools, out of school time providers and communities where SNAP-Ed populations learn, live, work, play and shop. By integrating nutrition education and physical activity into the settings where children spend their time, HealthMPowers creates a culture that supports lifelong healthy lifestyle choices for children, families and communities.

The Problem in Georgia

- 1 of 2 children consumes vegetables less than once per day.
- 1 of 3 children are overweight or obese.
- 1 of 4 children experience food insecurity.
- 3 of 4 children do not meet daily physical activity.

Annual Medical Costs

- Obesity: $190,200,000,000
- Food Insecurity: $160,700,000,000

Savings:

- One physically active child saves $2,741 in health care costs each year.
- Every $1 invested in nutrition generates as much as $138 in better health and increased productivity.

The Solution:

Nutrition and physical activity programs target some of the most significant health and financial costs facing both Georgia and our nation. Research shows that these education-based programs yield major immediate and long-term returns on investment.

Last year, childcare teams working with HealthMPowers implemented a total of 51 nutrition and physical activity improvements across their centers.

Healthy improvements included engaging families and provided them with information and resources, providing additional training and support to staff and caregivers, conducting regular healthy taste-testings and cooking activities for children, creating edible gardens and offering fresh daily fruits and vegetables, and integrating more physical activity into lesson plans.

The HealthMPowers staff helps centers and homes identify teams to lead their efforts, assess their current programs and policies and design improvement plans for the priority areas they want to strengthen. They also deliver innovative nutrition and physical activity model lessons for each classroom, and provide exciting resources to help centers put their plans for improvement into action for every child and family they serve.
Through the support of SNAP-Ed funding, the HealthMPowers’ Elementary Sector implemented a multi-year program in 87 Georgia elementary schools to improve healthy eating and physical activity behaviors.

The program provides teachers and staff with the training and resources necessary to continue sustainable improvements on their own. Students are engaged in a variety of learning activities that integrate physical activity and nutrition education into the school day. The program offers professional development trainings that cover a variety of topics and provide a platform for the sharing of best practices among participating schools.

The increased opportunities for nutrition education and physical activity provided by HealthMPowers led to healthier school environments, which led to improved student health behaviors and outcomes.

**Service Delivery:**
- 4,849 hours of HealthMPowers’ staff-delivered services

**Improved School Environment:**
- 46,795 hours of school-delivered nutrition & physical activity instruction

**Improved Behavior:**
- 95% of students improved one or more nutrition and/or physical activity behavior

**Improved Health Outcomes:**
- 73% improved aerobic capacity
- 78% maintained or improved BMI
In 2015-16, HeathMPowers’ SNAP-Ed program expanded to out-of-school time, and partnered with Boys & Girls Club of Metro Atlanta in six clubs. HealthMPowers used a whole-center approach to engage students, staff and families in a variety of activities to promote health choices.

Last year, Boys & Girls Clubs across Metro Atlanta made huge strides by eliminating unhealthy vending machines from their facilities. Centers also changed their schedules to integrate more physical activity into all of their programs. At the A. Worley Brown Club, adding 15 minutes of physical activity before each program ensures that every member gets 60 minutes of daily activity. Director John Reid noted that the kids are not only engaged in being physically active, but that, “There has also been a big difference in behavior problems and attention span. Kids pay attention more and get into less trouble because of the increased movement in all program areas.”

The HealthMPowers team worked with 33,621 participants in 42 Georgia middle schools to develop and create school health teams and student health advocate leaders to improve healthy eating and physical activity in their schools.

School health teams used self-assessment data to create plans for improving school health programming, policies and environments that target healthy eating and physical activity. Students were trained to be leaders and health advocates for their peers, and to use social marketing strategies to promote healthy behaviors.
The Community Sector began initial work with existing coalitions in three communities where HealthMPowers was already working with schools. These communities included Baldwin, Washington and Savannah-Chatham County.

Over the next two years, HealthMowers will partner with these communities to improve access to fruits and vegetables in retail settings like corner stores and implement a multi-channel social marketing campaign in the community to reinforce the behaviors children are learning in schools.

Family

The HealthMPowers Family Sector works in schools across the organization’s various sectors to ensure that families are receiving the same health messaging provided to students in schools in order to reinforce healthy nutrition and physical activity behaviors and environments at home.

Family Educators supported families by providing home-based activities and challenges for students and families to complete together. Family Educators provided 334 hours of instruction to 8,629 family members.
Investments in our children’s health future today will result in lower healthcare costs and greater security for the state’s fiscal future. Find out more about HealthMPowers at www.healthmpowers.org, and learn about SNAP-Ed’s efforts in other states at snap.nal.usda.gov/.

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